



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 Sunday, Dec. 3, 2017

CONTACT:
 Mónica Muñoz at 619-533-3780 or munozm@sandiego.gov

San Diego Fire-Rescue Increases Staffing in Advance of Increased Fire Threat

STRONG SANTA ANA WINDS PREDICTED NEXT WEEK

SAN DIEGO – Because a Santa Ana wind event is forecasted this week in the region, the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) will increase staffing between Monday, Dec. 4 and Thursday, Dec. 7, 2017. The National Weather Service (NWS) predicts strong Santa Ana winds in Southern California during this period. The NWS reports that extremely low relative humidity combined with strong Santa Ana winds and very dry fuels will cause an increase in the fire threat in San Diego as well as potentially damaging winds. SDFD closely monitors weather conditions and will increase or decrease staffing levels depending upon weather changes.

“Meteorologists at the National Weather Service have not seen models for a Santa Ana event like this in many years,” said Fire Chief Brian Fennessy. “We are being vigilant in upstaffing to protect San Diegans and their property. We ask that residents practice their evacuation plans and be prepared in case of a wildfire.”

SDFD upstaffing means an increase in the number of personnel as well as apparatus available for fire suppression efforts. Here is a summary of upstaffing levels for next week. Please keep in mind that these apparatus and personnel are in addition to the daily staffing requirements.

- Two Strike Teams of ten brush rigs. Each brush rig carries a crew of four firefighters. A strike team leader and strike team leader trainee are assigned to each Strike Team.
- One Strike Team of five standard fire engines. Each engine carries a crew of four firefighters each. A strike team leader and strike team leader trainee are assigned to this Strike Team.
- Two water tenders – one firefighter per water tender
- Two helicopters available around the clock. The helicopters include pilots, mechanics and a firefighter to staff the fuel tender.

An additional Strike Team (brush rigs) will be added because of elevated fire threat conditions in our area. This Strike Team matches the configuration of the previously mentioned team and will be available for any incident within the limits of the County of San Diego. Brush rigs are large off-road capable fire

apparatus which carry between 600 and 1500 gallons of water. Water tenders carry 3000 gallons of water and provide water supply to engines at vegetation fires.

SDFD will increase dispatcher and dispatch supervisor staffing in our Emergency Command & Data Center.

Additional apparatus for SDFD Air Operations are a fixed-wing air tactical plane and pilot. The pilot acts as the coordinator of the air and ground attack on a fire incident. General Atomics is also prepared to respond to our city or a regional emergency incident with their intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) fixed-wing aircraft. This aircraft collects a variety of information including photos and video. This information can be used in strategic fire suppression efforts.

Several years of drought coupled with heavy rains this past winter created significant fuel in the form of underbrush and grass. This fuel is extremely dry since no appreciable rain has fallen in the area recently. Santa Ana winds, low relative humidity and extremely dry fuels create conditions which are conducive to easily ignited and fast burning wildfires. Santa Ana winds cause tremendous difficulty in fire suppression efforts because wind direction can be unpredictable and winds cause wildfires to spread more quickly.

SDFD is prepared and reminds San Diegans to be prepared as well. Practicing an evacuation plan in advance of an emergency can mean the difference between injury and death. Often, wildland fire-related deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their homes.

- Leaving early will give residents the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. It's not necessary to wait until public safety personnel ask you to leave.
- Public safety personnel can perform their jobs more efficiently if they don't have to fight traffic congestion.
- If evacuation notifications are issued, please don't hesitate to leave.
- Pack valuable items, medications, pet food, etc. in advance in order to be ready to leave immediately if necessary.

Visit <https://www.sandiego.gov/fire/safety/tips/readyssetgo> to download your personal wildland fire action guide. The guide is available in English and Spanish and includes extensive preparedness information as well as helpful photos, recommendations and checklists.

###